



MEDIA RELEASE

STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF SAFETY AND HOMELAND SECURITY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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PUPIL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY FACT SHEET

THE FACTS:

- An average of six school-age passengers are fatally injured inside school buses each year, but an average of 16 are killed getting on and off the bus.
- More than half of the children killed in school bus-related crashes are ages five to seven years old. "Inattention" and "failure to yield" were factors most often reported by police in those crashes.
- The Tennessee Department of Safety's Pupil Transportation division of the Highway Patrol inspects school buses from school districts across Tennessee annually. During the 2010-11 school year, 9,976 buses were inspected with 1,024 being placed out of service.
- All school bus drivers in Tennessee must attend an annual training course in order to receive and maintain the school bus endorsement on their Driver Licenses. During the 2010-11 academic year, more than 12,000 received training.
- In 2010, State Troopers issued 3,186 citations in school zones across the state. Of those citations, 739 were issued to drivers who were speeding, while two drivers were cited for passing a stopped school bus.
- An estimated 440,000 to 480,000 public school buses navigate roads and highways in the United States each year, traveling approximately 4.4 billion miles.
- School buses are nearly nine times safer than passenger vehicles. But children must take care when boarding or leaving buses.
- Young children are most likely to be injured around school buses because they:
 - Hurry to get on or off the bus
 - Act before they think
 - Have little experience with traffic
 - Assume motorists will see them and will wait for them to cross
 - Don't always stay within the bus driver's line of sight
 - Drop something as they are getting off the bus and run into the path of the bus to pick it up.

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SAFETY TIPS:

- **FOR CHILDREN--GETTING ON AND OFF THE BUS SAFELY:**

- Always remain in direct eyesight of the bus driver;
- Get to the bus stop in plenty of time;
- Take 10 giant steps back from the curb while waiting for the bus and 10 steps when exiting the bus;
- Never try to get anything left on the bus after exiting;
- Never reach underneath the bus;
- Always follow the driver's directions for how to cross the street;
- Be alert to traffic and look both ways;
- Always cross in front of the bus, but *only* when the bus driver signals it is safe to do so.
- Have a safe place to wait for your bus, away from traffic and the street.
- Stay away from the bus until it comes to a complete stop and the driver signals you to enter.
- Use the handrail to enter and exit the bus.
- When exiting, look before stepping off the bus to be sure no cars are passing on the shoulder (side of the road). Move away from the bus.
- Before crossing the street, take 10 "giant steps" out from the front of the bus, or until the driver's face can be seen. Wait for the driver to signal that it's safe to cross.
- Look left-right-left when coming to the edge of the bus to make sure traffic is stopped. Keep watching traffic when crossing.
- Be aware of the street traffic around you. Drivers *are* required to follow certain rules of the road concerning school buses. However, not all do. Protect yourself and watch out!

- **FOR PARENTS:**

- Supervise children to make sure they get to the stop on time, wait far away from the road and avoid rough play.
- Teach your child to ask the driver for help if he/she drops something near the bus. If a child bends down to pick up something, the driver cannot see him/her and the child may be hit by the bus. Have your child use a backpack or book bag to keep loose items together.
- Make sure clothing and backpacks have no loose drawstrings or long straps that could get caught in the handrail or bus door.
- Encourage safe school bus loading and unloading.
- If you think a bus stop is in a dangerous place, talk with your school office or transportation director about changing the location.

- **FOR DRIVERS:**

- Yellow flashing lights on the bus indicate that it is preparing to stop and load or unload children. This means cars need to slow down and prepare to stop.
- It is illegal to pass a school bus with its red flashing lights and stop signal arm activated. Vehicles may not pass until the flashing red lights and signals are turned off or when the bus driver motions them through.
- Vehicles traveling in the same direction as the bus are always required to stop.
- Vehicles moving in the opposite direction as the bus are also required to stop unless they are on a divided highway.
- Never pass on the right side of the bus where children are entering and exiting. This is illegal and can have tragic results!

- **WHEN RIDING IN A CAR:**

- You might have heard before that most traffic crashes occur close to home...they do.
- Safety belts are the best form of protection passengers have in the event of a crash. They can lower the risk of injury by 45%.
- You are four times more likely to be seriously injured or killed if ejected from the vehicle in a crash.
- Everyone needs to be buckled up properly. That means older kids in seat belts, younger kids in booster seats and little kids in child safety seats.

- **WHEN RIDING A BIKE:**

- Mind all traffic signals and/or the crossing guard -- never cross the street against a light, even if you don't see any traffic coming.
- Walk your bike through intersections.
- Walk with a buddy.
- Wear reflective material...it makes you more visible to street traffic.

The Tennessee Department of Safety's mission is (www.tennessee.gov/safety) to ensure the safety and general welfare of the public. The department encompasses the Tennessee Highway Patrol, Office of Homeland Security and Driver License Services. General areas of responsibility include law enforcement, safety education, motorist services and terrorism prevention.